

# OUR · LADY · OF · THE · PILLAR

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A  
A  
0  
0  
0  
4  
4  
7  
0  
5  
7  
1



THE LIBRARY  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation





OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR









1843 1900

*Sobre a nudez forte da verdade  
o manto diáfano da phantasia*

**EÇA DE QUEIROZ**

OUR LADY  
OF THE PILLAR

BY

EÇA DE QUEIROZ

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY

EDGAR PRESTAGE

OF THE LISBON ROYAL ACADEMY  
OF SCIENCES, CHEVALIER OF THE  
ORDER OF S. THIAGO



LONDON  
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE  
AND COMPANY, LTD.

1906

Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty

PQ

9261

F17D3E

DEDICATED

BY PERMISSION, TO

HER MAJESTY D. AMELIA,

QUEEN OF PORTUGAL

860726



## TO THE READER

BEING in Lisbon in October last, I sauntered one evening into the Livraria Bertrand, a recognised meeting-place of men of letters in the Chiado, still the principal street of the Capital, and now known officially as the Rua Garrett, though, in practice, the greater poet has not displaced the lesser. There I found Senhor Francisco Ramos Paz, proprietor of the *Gazeta de Noticias* of Rio de Janeiro, and our conversation turned on Eça de Queiroz. I happened to say that I had recently published an English version of

viii OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

the *Suave Milagre* and had one of the *Defunto* ready for the press, whereupon Senhor Ramos Paz told me that the original MS. of the latter story belonged to him, it having been written for his paper, and that Queiroz had expressed the opinion to his publishers, MM. Lugan et Genelioux of Oporto, that it was his best short story. Finding my own opinion unexpectedly confirmed by so keen a self-critic as the Founder of the Realist School in Portugal, I have the less hesitation in submitting the *Defunto* (which I have ventured to re-name *Our Lady of the Pillar*) to your appreciation. In the Preface to *The Sweet Miracle* I referred to some of the leading works of Queiroz, and would only add that those who



desire to know more of him and of the romance in Portugal might read with advantage the *Revista Moderna* for November 20th, 1897, and the suggestive series of essays by Senhor J. Pereira de Sampaio (Bruno) entitled *A Geração Nova* (Porto, 1886).

The frontispiece of the present volume shows the monument in the Largo do Quintella in Lisbon raised to Queiroz by the devotion of the Conde de Arnoso and other admiring friends. The bust is generally agreed to be an excellent likeness, though the face perhaps wears a severer expression in marble than it did in life, and it has not therefore the photographic accuracy of the bust by Raphael Bordallo Pinheiro, a replica of which

faces me as I write. (The woman symbolises Reality, and her attitude shows her revealing the secrets of life to Eça's scrutinising gaze, while the inscription at the base sums up his ideal and achievement, and reads: 'Over the forceful nakedness of truth, the diaphonous mantle of fantasy.' The monument is the work of Senhor Antonio Teixeira Lopes, the creator of those two masterpieces, the bronze figure of History<sup>1</sup> erected in memory of the historian Oliveira Martins in the Prazeres Cemetery in Lisbon, and the statue in wood of St. Isabel in the Church of Santa Clara at Coimbra.

He learned his business at the Academia

<sup>1</sup> Pictured in the notable study by Senhor Antonio Arroyo, *Soares dos Reis e Teixeira Lopes*, Porto, 1899.

Portuense de Bellas Artes under the well-known sculptor Soares dos Reis, and at eighteen went to the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris, where he worked under Cavalier and Barrias, though the man who taught him most was Donatello. He exhibited at the Salon in his first year in France, and since then has advanced from one artistic triumph to another. His group 'A Viuva' gained him a gold medal at the International Exhibition in Berlin in 1896, his statue 'A Dôr' obtained a Grand Prix at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900, and now, at the age of forty, he is hailed as an original genius and as Portugal's greatest sculptor.

CHILTERN, BOWDON.

*March 1906.*



‘Erasmus was wont to affirm that, in his studies, he had not found anything more arduous than translation, nor a thing worthy of greater praise, if well done, nor of greater blame, if ill done.’—Damião de Goes (the friend of Erasmus) in the dedication of his version of Cicero’s *De Senectute*.



# OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

## I

IN 1474, a year abounding in divine favours for all Christendom, when King Henry iv. reigned in Castile, there came to live in the city of Segovia, where he had inherited a dwelling-house and garden, a youthful knight of untainted lineage and comely appearance named Don Ruy de Cardenas.

This house, which had been bequeathed to him by his uncle, an Archdeacon and Master of Canon Law, lay at the side and

## 2 OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

in the silent shadow of the Church of Our Lady of the Pillar ; and facing it, across the square, where the three spouts of an ancient fountain sang their song, stood the dark and grated palace of Don Alonso de Lara, a nobleman of great wealth and surly manners, who, in a ripe and grey old age, had espoused a young lady famed throughout Castile for her white skin, her hair the colour of the sun's rays and her neck like that of a royal heron.

Now Don Ruy, at his birth, had had Our Lady of the Pillar for Godmother, and ever remained her devout and loyal servitor, though, as he was a man of high spirit and gay, he loved arms, the chase, gallant regales, and even, now and then, a noisy night in a tavern with cards and tankards of wine. Love, and his convenient nearness to the holy place,



had led him to adopt the pious practice since his arrival in Segovia of visiting his divine Godmother each morning at the hour of Prime and begging in three *Ave Maria's* her blessing and graces. Again, as darkness came on, even after a hard run over field and mountain with harriers or falcon, he was wont to return and murmur sweetly a *Salve Regina* at the Vesper salutation; while, every Sunday, he bought of a Moorish flower-woman in the square a spray of jonquils or pinks or simple roses, and spread them with tenderness and gallant care in front of Our Lady's altar.

Now to this venerated Church of the Pillar came also each Sunday Donna Leonor, the famous and beautiful wife of the Lord of Lara, accompanied by a surly attendant with eyes harder and wider open

#### 4 OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

than those of an owl, and by two powerful lackeys, who guarded her on either side like towers. So jealous was Don Alonso, that he only permitted this fugitive visit because his confessor had strictly enjoined it on him, and for fear of offending Our Lady his neighbour, and he greedily noted their every step and their loitering from between the iron bars of a latticed window.

Donna Leonor spent the whole of the lingering days of the lingering week secluded in the grated mansion of black granite ; and all she had for recreation and air, even in the summer heats, were the depths of a dark green garden surrounded by such lofty walls that nothing could be seen emerging from them save here and there the top of some melancholy cypress. But this short visit of hers to Our Lady of the Pillar sufficed for Don Ruy to fall

madly in love with her on the May morning when he saw her kneeling before the altar in a radiance of sunlight, haloed by her golden hair, with her long lashes hanging over a *Book of Hours*, her rosary falling from between her delicate fingers, all elegant, gentle and white, with the whiteness of a lily blooming in the shade, looking yet whiter amid her black lace and the black satin gown that broke round her graceful form in hard folds over the chapel flags, the ancient flags of burying-places.) When, after a moment of confusion and delicious wonder, he knelt, it was less to the Virgin of the Pillar, his divine Godmother, than to that mortal apparition; her name and life he knew not, but only that he would give his life and name for her if she would yield herself for so uncertain a price.

## 6 OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

Murmuring in a graceless prayer the three *Ave Maria's* with which he saluted Mary each morning, he picked up his *sombrero*, lightly descended the resounding nave, and stopped in the porch, waiting for her among the leprous beggars who were lousing themselves in the sun. But when, after a lapse of time, during which Don Ruy felt his heart beat with unaccustomed anxiety and fear, Donna Leonor passed and paused to moisten her fingers in the marble holy-water stoup, either from timidity or inattention, she did not raise her eyes to him under her drawn veil. With her attendant of the staring eyes glued to her side, and between the two lackeys as between twin towers, she leisurely crossed the square, stone by stone, enjoying, doubtless, as prisoners do, the expanse of air and the free sun

that bathed it, and Don Ruy was astonished when she penetrated into the sombre arcade, with its stout pillars which supported the palace, and she disappeared through a narrow door all covered with iron-work. This then was the famous Donna Leonor, the lovely and noble lady of Lara. . . . Then commenced seven drawn-out days which he spent seated at his stone window-seat gazing at that black door, with its thick covering of iron-work, as if it were the door of Paradise, and an angel would issue from it to give him tidings of Eternal Bliss. At last the lingering Sunday came, and as, bearing a bunch of yellow carnations for his divine Godmother, he passed through the square at the hour of Prime, when the bells were ringing, he crossed Donna Leonor coming out, white, sweet,

## 8 OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

and pensive, from between the pillars of the dark arcade like a moon from between clouds. The carnations almost fell from his hands in the delightful agitation with which his breast heaved more strongly than a sea, and his whole soul fled from him in tumult in a look that devoured her.

And she too raised her eyes to Don Ruy, but eyes reposeful and serene, without a gleam of curiosity or even of consciousness that they were exchanging glances with other eyes so inflamed and darkened by desire. The young knight abstained from entering the church from the pious fear of not giving to his divine God-mother the attention which would, he knew, be all taken up by her who, though only human, was already mistress of his heart and deified there.

He waited eagerly at the door among

the beggars, parching the carnations with the heat of his trembling hands, and thinking how long-drawn-out was the rosary she was saying, and, as soon as Donna Leonor began to descend the nave, he felt within his soul the sweet rustling of the thick silks she dragged over the stone slabs. The white lady passed by, and the same absent look, heedless and calm, which she cast over the beggars and the square, she let fall over him, either because she did not comprehend that youth who had suddenly turned so pale, or because she did not yet distinguish him from things and forms which were of no account to her.

Don Ruy moved away, sighing deeply, and, once in his room, devoutly placed before the image of the Virgin the flowers which he had not offered at her altar in

the church. His whole life then became one long complaint at finding such coldness and cruelty in that woman, unique amongst women, who had taken hold of his light and wandering heart and made it serious. With a hope which he clearly foresaw would prove deceptive, he began to pace round the lofty garden walls; or, muffled in his cloak, leaning against a corner, spent slow hours contemplating the bars of the lattice windows, black and thick like those of a prison. The walls did not part asunder, nor did a single ray of hopeful light issue from the gratings. The whole mansion was like a sepulchre where lay an insensible creature, and behind the cold stones there was also a cold breast. To give vent to his feelings he composed with pious care, during watchful nights over parchment, lament-



able verses which failed to relieve him. Before the altar of Our Lady of the Pillar, on the same slabs where he had seen her kneeling, he rested his knees and stayed without words of prayer, in bitter-sweet musing, hoping that his heart would be calmed and solaced under the influence of Her who calms and solaces all. But he always rose up more miserable, and with only the feeling of how cold and hard were the stones on which he had knelt. The whole world seemed to him to contain nought save severity and coldness. On other bright Sunday mornings he met Donna Leonor, and her eyes always remained heedless, and as though unmindful; or, when they crossed his, they were so innocent and free from all emotion that Don Ruy would have preferred them offended and darting anger, or haughtily averted in

proud disdain. Certain it was that Donna Leonor knew him now, but she also knew the Moorish flower-woman squatted before her basket beside the fountain, or the poor who loused themselves in the sun before Our Lady's porch. Nor could Don Ruy any longer think that she was cruel and cold. She was only royally remote, like a star that revolves and glitters high above, unconscious that below, in a world it cannot discern, eyes it does not suspect are contemplating it, adoring it, and intrusting it with the government of their fortune and destiny. Then Don Ruy thought, 'She will not, I cannot; it was a dream that is ended, and may Our Lady keep us both in her favour!' And being a very discreet knight, as soon as he recognised that she could not be moved from her indifference, he neither

sought her nor even raised his eyes any more to the gratings of her windows, nor did he even enter the Church of Our Lady when, casually, from the porch, he espied her kneeling with her graceful golden head bent over her *Book of Hours*.

## II

THE old attendant, whose eyes were more wide-open and harder than those of an owl, hastened to tell the Lord of Lara how a bold youth of comely appearance, a new tenant in the old house of the Archdeacon, continually crossed and re-crossed the square, and posted himself in front of the church to throw his heart, through his eyes, at Donna Leonor. Very bitterly did the jealous nobleman know it already, for when, falconlike, he watched from his window the graceful lady on her way to church, he had observed the pauses and darted looks

of that gallant youth, and had pulled his beard with rage. Ever since then, in truth, his most intense occupation had been to hate Don Ruy, the Canon's impudent nephew, who had dared to raise his low desires to the great Lady of Lara. He now had him continually spied upon by a retainer, and knew wherever he went and stayed, the friends with whom he hunted or amused himself, and even the men who cut his doublets and furbished his sword—in fact, every hour of his life. And he watched Donna Leonor more closely still, her every movement, her most fugitive moods, her silences, her conversations with her attendants, her distractions over her embroidery, her habit of musing under the trees in the garden, her demeanour and colour when she returned from church. But

Donna Leonor showed such unaltered serenity in the tranquillity of her heart, that not even the most fault-fancying jealousy could discover a blemish in her snow-white purity. Thereupon Don Alonso's rancour was turned with redoubled asperity against the Canon's nephew for having coveted her purity, her bright sun-coloured hair, and her royal heron's neck, which were his alone and the rich delight of his life. And when he paced the sombre gallery of his mansion, resonant with its vaulted roof, wrapt in his fur-trimmed jerkin, the point of his grizzled beard thrust out in front, his thick tangled hair bristling backwards, and his fists clenched, he was always ruminating the same gall: 'He has attempted her virtue, he has attacked my honour, he

is guilty on two counts and deserves a double death.' > But something like terror was mixed with his rage when he learned that Don Ruy no longer awaited Donna Leonor in the square, nor amorously watched the walls of his great house, nor entered the church when she was praying there on Sundays, and that he kept himself so entirely foreign to her that, one morning, when he was standing close to the arcade, and must distinctly have heard the door through which she was about to appear creak and open, he had remained with his back turned, without moving, laughing with a stout knight who was reading to him from a parchment. Such well-affected indifference could only serve, for sure, thought Don Alonso, to hide

some very evil purpose! What was the clever deceiver plotting now? Everything in the ill-tempered *fdalgo* became intensified—jealousy, rancour, vigilance, regret for his hoary and ugly old age. In the calm of Donna Leonor he suspected art and stratagem, and straightway forbade her visits to Our Lady of the Pillar. On the accustomed mornings, he ran to the church to say the rosary and carry the excuses of Donna Leonor—‘who cannot come’ (he murmured, bowed before the altar), ‘for the reason you know, most pure Virgin.’ He carefully visited and strengthened the black bolts of every gate of his mansion, and at night loosed two mastiffs in the shadows of the walled garden. At the head of his great bed, next to the table which



carried his lamp, reliquary, and a cup of wine hot with cinnamon and cloves to invigorate his forces, there always shone a long, naked sword. But with all these precautions he scarcely slept, and at every moment raised himself up in alarm from between the deep pillows, and clawed Donna Leonor with rough and eager hands that bruised her neck, to hiss very low in his torment, 'Say you love me only.' Afterwards, when dawn came, he perched himself up to watch, like a falcon, the windows of Don Ruy. He never caught sight of him now, either at the church door at the hour of Mass, or returning on horseback from the country at the ringing of the Angelus; and perceiving that he had disappeared from his customary haunts and turns, he

suspected his presence all the more in Donna Leonor's heart. At length, one night, after he had trodden the gallery flags for a long while, secretly revolving suspicion and hatred, he cried out for his steward, and ordered packs and saddle animals to be got ready. He would leave early at daybreak with Donna Leonor for his property at Cabril, two leagues distant from Segovia! The departure did not take place at dawn, like the flight of a miser who goes to hide his treasure far away, but was carried out with solemnity and at leisure. The litter stood waiting long hours before the arcade with its curtains open, whilst a stable-boy led the *fidalgo's* white she-mule, with her Moorish caparisons, up and down the square, and on the garden side, under

the sun and the flies, a troop of he-mules laden with trunks fastened with iron rings kept the narrow street in wonder with the jingling of their bells.

In this way Don Ruy learned of the journey of the Lord of Lara, and thus the whole city learned it too. It was a great satisfaction to Donna Leonor, who was fond of Cabril, with its rich orchards and gardens, on to which the balconied windows of her light apartments opened without a grating; there, at least, she had ample air, full sunlight, boxes of flowers to water, an aviary, and such long walks of laurel and yew that they were almost liberty. And she hoped that afterwards the country would lighten those cares that had lately made her lord and husband so wrinkled and taci-

turn. But this hope was not realised, for at the end of a week the face of Don Alonso had not yet lost its cloud, and it was evident that neither fresh greenery, murmurs of running waters, nor scents scattered in the flowering rosaries could calm so bitter and deep an agitation. As in Segovia, he restlessly paced up and down the resounding and vaulted gallery buried in his sheepskin coat, with the point of his beard thrust out in front, and his thick tangled hair bristling backwards; and he had a habit of showing his teeth in a quiet snarl, as if he were meditating evil deeds, and savouring their bitterness in advance. And the whole interest of his life had become concentrated on a retainer who was constantly galloping between Segovia and

Cabril, and he sometimes awaited him at the commencement of the village near the large Cross, and stayed listening to the man, who dismounted, out of breath, and straightway gave him his hurried news.

One night when Donna Leonor was telling her beads in her room with her attendants by the light of a waxen torch, the Lord of Lara entered very slowly, bearing in his hand a sheet of parchment, and a pen dipped in his bone inkstand. With a rough sign he dismissed the attendants, who feared him as though he were a wolf, and pushing a footstool near the table, he turned his face towards Donna Leonor, which he had composed into a calm and pleasant expression, as if he were only coming to ask for something natural and easily done, and said:

‘Lady, I want you to write me here a letter that is very necessary to write.’ . . . She was so accustomed to submission that without more reflection or curiosity, and only going to hang the beads which she had been telling at the head of the bed, she arranged herself on the footstool; and with much application, in order that the writing might be neat and clear, her elegant fingers traced the first short line which the Lord of Lara dictated, and it was: ‘My knight . . .’ But when he dictated the next, and longer one, in a cutting manner, Donna Leonor threw down the pen as if it burnt her, and recoiling from the table, cried out in her affliction: ‘Why must I write such things, and so false?’ In a burst of fury the Lord of Lara tore

a dagger from his girdle, and shook it close to her face, with a dull roar: 'Either you write what I order you, and what is needful for me, or, by God, I will pierce your heart!' Whiter than the waxen torch that lighted them, her flesh creeping at that glittering blade, and in a supreme fear that accepted everything, Donna Leonor murmured: 'By the Virgin Mary, do not harm me! Do not be angry, for I live to obey and serve you. Now order, and I will write.' Then, clenching his fists on the ends of the table where he had placed the dagger, the Lord of Lara crushed the fragile, unhappy woman under his hard, wounding gaze, and dictated, nay, flung at her hoarsely, piece by piece, dragged out, a letter that, when

finished, and traced in a very hesitating and trembling hand, read: ‘My knight, you have very ill understood, or very ill repay, my love for you, which I could never discover to you openly in Segovia. Now I am here at Cabril burning to see you, and if your desire corresponds to mine, you can very easily realise it, because my husband is absent at another property of his, and this of Cabril is quite easy and open. Come to-night, enter by the garden door beside the lane, pass the fish-pond, until you reach the terrace; there you will espy a ladder resting against one of the windows of the house, which is the window of my room, where you will be very sweetly welcomed by her who anxiously awaits you.’ ‘Now, lady, sign your name below, for that is necessary above all!’ As red as if she were being



stripped before a crowd, Donna Leonor slowly traced her name. 'And now'—ordered her husband more quietly through his clenched teeth—'address it to Don Ruy de Cardenas!' She dared to raise her eyes, surprised at that unknown name. 'Go on! "To Don Ruy de Cardenas,"' shouted the churlish man, and she directed her immodest letter to Don Ruy de Cardenas. Don Alonso put the parchment in his girdle next to the dagger which he had sheathed, and went out in silence, his beard pointing forward, hushing the noise of his steps on the flags of the corridor. She remained on the footstool in a state of immeasurable fright, her wearied hands fallen in her lap and her gaze lost in the darkness of the still night. Death appeared to her less dark than this dark adventure in which she felt herself

involved and borne along. Who was this Don Ruy de Cardenas of whom she had never heard, who had never passed across her quiet life, peopled by so few memories and men? And he certainly knew her, had met her and had followed her, at least with his eyes, since it was a natural and consequent thing that he should receive from her a letter of such passion and promises. . . . Thus did a man, a young man, evidently well-born, perhaps handsome, penetrate rudely into her destiny, brought there by the hand of her husband. So intimately, even, had this man become a part of her life without preparation on her side, that her garden gate was already open for him at night, and a ladder propped against her window at night for him to mount. And it was her husband who, with the greatest

secrecy, set wide the door and raised the ladder. . . . Why? Then, in a flash, Donna Leonor understood the truth, the shameful truth, and it drew from her an anguished and half-stifled cry. It was an ambush! The Lord of Lara was attracting this Don Ruy to Cabril with a splendid promise, to get him in his power, and certainly to kill him, defenceless and alone! And herself, her love, her body were the shining promises set before the beguiled eyes of the luckless youth. So her husband was using her beauty and her bed as a golden net into which that rash prize was to fall. What greater wrong could there be? And what imprudence too? Don Ruy de Cardenas might very well distrust and not accept such an openly amorous invitation, and afterwards, in laughing triumph, show all over Segovia

that letter in which the wife of Alonso de Lara offered him her bed and body. But no! the poor fellow would hasten to Cabril and die, die miserably in the black silence of the night, without either priest or sacraments, his soul sunk in the sin of love! Die without doubt, for the Lord of Lara would never permit the man who had received such a letter to live. So that youth would die for love of her, for a love that, while it had never brought him a single pleasure, now brought him death. Clearly for love of her, since such hatred as that of the Lord of Lara, a hatred that sated itself with such disloyalty and villainy, could only spring from jealousy which obscured in his mind all the duties of a knight and a Christian. He must have surprised glances, movements, and designs of this Don Ruy, who had not

been sufficiently on the alert, because he was very much in love. But how? when? Dimly she remembered a youth who had crossed her one Sunday in the square and awaited her at the church porch with a bundle of carnations in his hands. . . . Was it he? He had a noble bearing, and was very pale, with big, black, passionate eyes. She had passed by, indifferent. . . . The carnations he carried were red and yellow. . . . To whom was he taking them? Ah! if she could warn him very soon, at daybreak. But how, if there was no retainer or manservant in Cabril in whom she could confide? But to allow a brutal sword traitorously to pierce that heart which was full of her, beating for her, all in hopes of her . . .!

Oh, the mad and ardent rush of Don

Ruy from Segovia to Cabril, with the promise of the enchanting garden open to him, the ladder placed against the window, under the silence and protection of the night! Would the Lord of Lara really order a ladder to be set against the window? Yes, for a certainty, in order the more easily to kill him, the poor, sweet, innocent youth, as he was mounting, ill secure on an uncertain step, his hands employed and his sword sleeping in the scabbard. . . . And so, in the coming night, facing her bed, her window would be open and a ladder would be raised against her window waiting for a man. Ambushed in the shade of the room, her husband would certainly kill that man. . . .

But supposing the Lord of Lara were to wait for this Don Ruy de Cardenas

outside the walls of the *quinta*, and assail him brutally in some bypath, and, either because he was less dexterous or strong in a clash of arms, were himself to be pierced through and fall without the other knowing whom he had killed? And she there, in her room, unknowing, and all the gates open and the ladder raised, and that man appearing at the window in the soft shade of the warm night while the husband who ought to defend her lay dead in an obscure path. . . . What would she do, Virgin Mother? Surely she would haughtily repel the bold youth. But his surprise and anger at his baffled desire! 'I have come at your call, lady.' And he would carry there on his heart her letter, with her name, which her hand had traced. How could she tell him of the ambush and the deceit? It was such a

long tale to tell in the silence and solitude of the night whilst his moist black eyes were beseeching and piercing her. . . . Miserable she, if the Lord of Lara were to die and leave her, solitary and defenceless, in that great open house. But how miserable also, if that youth, who was summoned by her and who loved her and who was hurrying to her, dazzled by his love, were to meet with death in the place of his hope which was the place of his sin, and dying in the midst of sin, were to roll down whither all hope is at an end. . . . Only twenty-five years old too—if he was the man she remembered, pallid and so good-looking, with a jerkin of purple velvet and a bunch of carnations in his hand at the church door in Segovia. . . . Two tears fell from the tired eyes of Donna Leonor, and bending her knees



and lifting her whole soul to the heavens where the moon was beginning to rise, she murmured, in her boundless grief and faith, 'O Holy Virgin of the Pillar, Lady mine, watch over us both, watch over us all. . . .'

Don Ruy was entering the fresh *patio* of his house in the hot hour, when a young peasant got up from a stone seat in the shade and taking from his srip a letter, handed it to him murmuring, 'Haste and read it, sir, for I have to return to Cabril to the person who sent me.' . . . Don Ruy opened the parchment and, dazzled by what he saw, beat it against his breast as though to bury it in his heart. . . . The young peasant anxiously insisted: 'Make haste, sir, make haste! You need not reply. Only give me a sign that you have received the message.' Don Ruy,

very pallid, pulled off one of his gloves embroidered with twisted silk, and the youth rolled it up and hid it in his scrip, and was already making off on the points of his sandals when Don Ruy detained him with a sign: 'Listen, what road are you taking to Cabril.' The shortest and loneliest for bold men, which leads past Gallows Hill.' 'Good.' Don Ruy climbed the stone stairs and, once in his apartment, without even removing his hat, again read by the lattice window that blessed parchment in which Donna Leonor summoned him at night to her room and the entire possession of her being. And he was not astonished by this offer after so constant and steady an indifference on her part. Rather he at once saw in it a love which was very astute, because very strong; a love that,

with great patience, hides itself in the face of obstacles and perils, and silently prepares its hour of satisfaction, all the better and more delicious because so prepared. She had always loved him, then, since the blessed morning when their eyes had crossed in Our Lady's porch! And whilst he was circling those garden walls and complaining of her coldness, which seemed to him colder than the cold walls themselves, she had already given him her soul; and, full of constancy, with loving sagacity, suppressing the least sigh, lulling suspicion to sleep, she was preparing the radiant night in which she would also give him her body. Such firmness and such shrewd understanding in the affairs of love made her, in his eyes, all the more beautiful and the more to be desired! How im-

patiently he looked then at the sun, that lingered so that afternoon in its descent towards the mountains! In his room, with the lattice-blinds drawn, to concentrate his happiness the better, without resting, he lovingly made ready everything for his triumphal journey—fine clothing, dainty laces, a jerkin of black velvet and perfumed essences. Twice he went down to the stable to make certain that his horse was well shod and well groomed, and he bent and re-bent on the floor the sword-blade he was to wear at his girdle to test it. . . . But his chief care was the road to Cabril, though he knew it well, and the village clustering round the Franciscan Monastery, and the old Roman bridge with its Calvary, and the deep lane that led to the heritage of the Lord of Lara. In that very winter

he had passed by there as he was going out to hunt on the mountains with two friends from Astorga, and had caught sight of the tower of the Laras, and thought: 'There is the tower of my ungrateful one.' How he had deceived himself! The nights were now moonlight, and he would leave Segovia quietly by the gate of St. Mauros. A short gallop and he would be at Gallows Hill. He knew it well also, that place of sadness and terror, with its four stone pillars where criminals were hanged, and where their bodies remained, swayed to and fro by the winds and parched by the sun, until the cords grew rotten and the skeletons fell down, white, and cleaned of their flesh by the ravens' beaks. Behind the hill lay the Ladies' Lagoon. The last time he had been by there was

on the day of the Apostle St. Matthias, when the Corregedor and the Confraternities of Charity and Peace went in procession to give holy burial to the skeletons which had fallen on the black earth, picked of their flesh by the birds. From there the road ran smooth and straight to Cabril.

Thus did Don Ruy meditate his venturesome journey whilst the afternoon was waning. But when it grew dark, and the bats began to circle about the church towers, and the niches of the Holy Souls were lighted up in the corners of the square, the brave youth felt a strange fear, the fear of that happiness which was drawing near to him, and which seemed to him supernatural. Was it true then that this woman, famous throughout Castile for her divine beauty, and more inaccessible

than a constellation, would in a short space be his—all his, in the silence and security of an alcove, when these devotional lights before the pictures of the Holy Souls had not yet been extinguished? And what had he done to enjoy so great a good? He had trod the flags of a square, he had waited in the porch of a church, and sought with his eyes two other eyes which, either through indifference or want of attention, remained lowered. Then, without grief, he had abandoned his hope. . . . And lo! suddenly those absent eyes seek him, and those closed arms open to him, wide and bare, and with her body and soul that woman cries out to him: ‘O foolish man, that you did not understand me! Come! She who discouraged you now belongs to you!’ Was there ever such

fortune as this? So great, so rare was it, that, unless human experience errs, ill-fortune must already be in pursuit! It was so of a truth already, since how great an ill-fortune lay in the knowledge that after such good fortune, when, early in the morning, he left her divine embrace and retired to Segovia, his Leonor, the supreme good of his life, and so unexpectedly acquired for a moment, would straightway fall again under the power of another master! What did it matter? Let troubles and jealousies come afterwards! That night was magnificently his, the whole world an empty vision, and the one reality that dimly-lighted room at Cabril, where she would await him with unbound hair! Eagerly he descended the stairs and threw himself on his horse; then, for prudence' sake, he



crossed the square very slowly, with his sombrero worn clear of his face, as though he were making an ordinary promenade in search of the freshness of night outside the walls. No meeting disturbed him until he got to the gate of St. Mauros. There, a beggar, who was squatted in the darkness of an arch monotonously playing his *sanfona*, begged with a whine the Virgin and all the Saints to have that gentle knight in their sweet and holy guard. Don Ruy had stopped to throw him an alms, when he remembered that he had not been that evening to the church at the hour of vespers to pray and beg a blessing of his divine God-mother. He immediately leapt down from his horse, for, just close to the old arch, a lamp flickered, lighting a picture. It was an image of the Virgin, with her breast

transfixed by seven swords. Don Ruy knelt, rested his hat on the flags, and with raised hands said a *Salve Regina* with passionate ardour. The yellow reflection of the light enveloped the face of Our Lady, who, either not feeling the pain of the seven points, or as if they only gave her ineffable joys, smiled with bright red lips. Whilst he was praying, the small bell in the convent of St. Dominic, on one side, began to sound the Agony. In the black shadow of the arch the *sanfona* ceased, and the beggar<sup>r</sup> murmured, ‘There lies a friar dying!’ Don Ruy said an *Ave Maria* for the friar who was dying. The Virgin of the seven swords smiled sweetly—the passing bell, then, was not a bad omen! Don Ruy mounted his horse gaily and set off. Beyond the gate of St. Mauros,

after passing some potters' hovels, the road followed a narrow, black course between lofty aloes. Behind the low hills, at the bottom of the dark plain, rose the first reflection, yellow and languid, of the full moon, which was still hidden. Don Ruy rode slowly, fearing to reach Cabril very early, before the maidservants and the men had finished their evening work and the rosary. Why had not Donna Leonor appointed him an hour in her clear and deliberate letter? . . . Then his imagination ran on ahead, broke into the garden at Cabril, and flew up the promised ladder, and he, too, let himself go after it in an eager race that tore up the stones of the ill-laid road. Then he drew in his panting horse. It was early! It was early! And he resumed his weary pace, feeling his heart beat

against his breast like an imprisoned bird against the bars.

So he reached the Calvary, where the road split into two roads, more closely joined than the prongs of a fork, both cutting through the pine wood. Baring his head before the image of the Crucified, Don Ruy had a moment of anguish, because he did not remember which of them led to Gallows Hill. He had already plunged into the gloomier of the two, when, from between the silent pines a light appeared dancing in the darkness. It was an old woman in rags with long flowing tresses bent over a staff, and carrying a lamp. 'Where does this road lead to?' shouted Ruy. The old woman swung her lamp higher up to observe the knight—'To Xarama.' The light

and the old woman immediately disappeared, melting away into the shade as if they had risen up there only to warn the knight of his mistaken road. He had already turned back with a dash, and rounding the Calvary, he galloped along the other and wider road, until, over the brightness of the sky, he caught sight of the black pillars and black beams of Gallows Hill. Then he stayed motionless, erect in his stirrups. On a tall, bare hill without either grass or heather, connected by a low wall, full of breaches, the four pillars of granite rose up black and enormous in the yellow moonlight, looking like the four corners of a ruined house. Upon the pillars rested four stout beams. From the beams were suspended four hanged men, black and

rigid, in the still, dumb air. All around seemed dead as they. Fat birds of prey slept perched upon the beams. Beyond, the dead water of the Ladies' Lagoon shone livid, and in the heavens the moon was growing large and full. Don Ruy murmured the *Paternoster* due from every Christian to those guilty souls. Then he urged on his horse, and passed by—when, in the immense silence and the immense solitude, a voice rose and resounded, a voice that called him, supplicating and slow: 'Knight, stay you, come hither!' Don Ruy drew rein sharply, and standing in his stirrups cast his astonished eyes over all that ominous wilderness. All he saw was the rough hill, the still, shining water, the beams, the dead men. He thought it must have been

an illusion of the night, or the daring of some wandering demon, and calmly spurred his horse, without alarm or haste, as if he were in a street in Segovia. But, behind him, the voice came again and more urgently called him, with anxiety, almost with affliction: 'Wait, knight; do not go on; return; come here!' . . . Don Ruy pulled up again, and turning in his saddle, boldly gazed at the four bodies suspended from the beams. The voice sounded from their direction, and being human could only issue from a human form! One of these hanged men, then, had called him with all that haste and anxiety. Did there remain in any, by God's wonderful mercy, breath and life? Or was it that—a still greater marvel—one of those half-putrified carcasses

detained him to transmit him warnings from beyond the grave? . . . But whether the voice proceeded from a living breast or a dead breast, it would be great cowardice to go off as if in a fright without attending to it and listening. He immediately drove his trembling horse into the middle of the hill, and stopping, erect and calm, with his hand at his side, cried, after steadfastly gazing at the four suspended bodies, one by one: 'Which of you hanged men dared to call for Don Ruy de Cardenas?'

Then the one who had his back to the full moon replied from the top of the cord, very quietly and naturally, like a man talking from his window to the street: 'It was I, sir.'

Don Ruy drove his horse forward.



He could not distinguish the man's face, which was buried in his breast, and hidden by his long, black, falling tresses. All he saw was that his hands were free and unbound, and also his bare feet, which were already withered and the colour of bitumen.

‘What do you want of me?’ The hanged man sighed and murmured: ‘Do me the great favour, sir, to cut the cord by which I am suspended.’ Don Ruy snatched his sword, and with a sure blow cut the half-rotten cord. With a sinister sound of clashing bones the body fell on the ground, and lay stretched out there for a moment, but immediately righted itself on its ill-secure and still sleeping feet, and raised towards Don Ruy a dead face, which was a skull with the skin tightly glued

to it, and more yellow than the moon that beat upon it. The eyes showed neither movement nor light. The two lips grinned in a stony smile. From the whitest of teeth issued the point of a very black tongue. Don Ruy displayed neither terror nor loathing, but calmly sheathing his sword, asked: 'Art thou alive or dead?' The man slowly contracted his shoulders: 'Sir, I know not. Who knows what is life? Who knows what is death?' . . . 'But, what do you want of me?' With his long, fleshless fingers the hanged man enlarged the knot of the cord that still encircled his neck, and said very calmly and firmly: 'Sir, I must go with you to Cabril, whither you are going.'

The knight started so sharply in his astonishment, pulling back the reins,

that his good horse reared up as if struck by the same fright. 'With me to Cabril?' The man bent his spine, displaying all the bones sharper than the teeth of a saw through a long rent in his tammy shirt. 'Sir,' he prayed, 'deny me not, for I shall receive a great reward if I do you a great service.' Then it suddenly occurred to Don Ruy that that might well be some dreadful trick of the Demon, and fixing his piercing eyes on the dead face which was upraised to him, anxiously awaiting his consent, he slowly made a large Sign of the Cross. The hanged man bent his knees with startled reverence. 'Why do you try me with that Sign, sir? By it alone we obtain remission, and from it alone I hope for mercy.' Then Don Ruy thought that

if that man was not sent by the Demon, he might well be sent by God, and so, straightway, devoutly, with a gesture of submission in which he abandoned all to Heaven, he consented and accepted his awful companion.

‘Come with me, then, to Cabril, if God sends you, but I shall ask you no questions, and you must ask none of me!’

He took his horse down the road all lighted up by the moon. The hanged man followed at his side with such airy steps that, even when Don Ruy galloped, he kept touching his stirrup, as if he were borne along by a silent wind. Now and then, to breathe freely, he pulled back the knot of the cord that was twisted round his neck, and as they were passing between hedges

where the scent of wild-flowers was wafted about, the man murmured with extraordinary relief and delight, 'How good it is to run!' Don Ruy was filled with amazement and a torment of care. He understood clearly now that that was a corpse revived by God for a strange and hidden service. But why did God give him such a terrible companion? To protect him? To prevent Donna Leonor, beloved of Heaven for her piety, from falling into mortal sin? But had the Lord no Angels left in heaven that He must needs employ a man who had paid the death penalty on so divine a mission of such high favour? . . . Ah, how gladly would he turn his horse towards Segovia were it not for a knight's gallant loyalty, his pride in never turn-

ing back, and his submission to the orders of God which he felt weigh upon him. . . .

From a high part of the road they suddenly caught sight of Cabril, and the towers of the Franciscan Convent showing white in the moonlight, and the farmhouses sleeping among the gardens. Very silently, with never a dog barking behind the gates or from the top of the walls, they descended to the old Roman bridge. In front of the Calvary the hanged man fell on his knees on the flags, lifted up the livid bones of his hands, and remained a long time in prayer, now and again heaving a deep sigh. Afterwards, as they entered the narrow lane, he drank much and took comfort from a spring that ran and sang under the branches of a willow-tree. As

the path was very narrow, he walked in front of the knight, his whole body bent, and his arms firmly crossed over his breast, and made not a sound. (The moon was mounting high in the heavens, and Don Ruy gazed with bitterness on that full and lustrous disc which shed such indiscreet brightness all around on his secret. Ah! how the night that should have been a divine one was being spoiled! (An immense moon was coming out from between the mountains to lighten up everything.) A hanged man descended from the gibbet to follow him, and know all. God had so ordained it; but how sad for him to reach the sweet door, sweetly promised, with such an intruder by his side under that brilliantly clear sky!

The hanged man pulled up sharply and raised his arm, from which his sleeve hung in tatters. It was the end of the lane which opened out into a wider and more beaten road: and in front of them the lengthy wall of the Lord of Lara's *quinta* showed white, with its belvedere and little stone balconies, the whole covered with ivy. 'Sir,' murmured the hanged man, respectfully holding Don Ruy's stirrup, 'the gate by which you must enter the garden is only a few paces from this belvedere. It is best you should leave your horse here, tied to a tree, if you think you can safely trust it, for in the business we are undertaking the mere sound of our footsteps is too much!' Don Ruy dismounted silently and fastened his horse, which he knew



to be faithful and sure, to the trunk of a poplar tree, and, so submissive had he become to that companion imposed by God, that, without further consideration, he followed him touching the wall beaten by the moonlight. The hanged man advanced now with leisurely caution, on bare tiptoe, watching the top of the wall, scrutinising the blackness of the hedge, and stopping to listen for noises which only he perceived—for Don Ruy had never known a night more deeply asleep and dumb. And this fear in one who should have been indifferent to human perils slowly filled the brave knight also with so deep a distrust that he took his dagger from its sheath, folded his cloak round his arm, and walked on guard, with his eyes flashing, as if

he were in a place of ambushes and strife. In this manner they arrived at a low door, which the hanged man pushed, and which opened without a creak of the hinges. They penetrated into a walk, on either side of which were thick yews, up to a tank full of water, where leaves of water-lilies floated, which was surrounded by rude stone seats covered by boughs of flowering shrubs. 'That way!' murmured the hanged man, extending his withered arm. It was an avenue, beyond the tank, vaulted over and darkened by dense and ancient trees. They went down it like shadows in the shade, the hanged man in front, Don Ruy following, very cleverly, without brushing a branch, and scarcely touching the sand with his feet. A slight thread

of water purred among the lawns, and climbing roses grew up the tree-trunks and gave a sweet smell. Don Ruy's heart began again to beat with loving hope. 'Hush!' uttered the hanged man. Don Ruy almost stumbled over the sinister creature, who stopped short with arms outstretched like the bars of a gate. In front of them, four stone steps mounted to a terrace, where the light was full without a shadow. Crouching down they clambered up the steps, and at the end of a treeless garden full of well-fashioned flower-beds, edged by short box, they espied one side of the house 'beaten by the full moon. In the middle, between the breast-high windows, which were closed, a stone balcony, with pots of basil at the corners, had its glass windows

opened wide. The room inside was blotted out, and made a dark gap in the bright façade bathed by the moonlight; and leaning against the balcony was a ladder with rungs of cord. Then the hanged man sharply pushed Don Ruy away from the steps into the darkness of the avenue, and there, in a pressing manner, dominating the knight, exclaimed: 'Sir! it is best that you should give me your hat and cloak now! Stay you, very still, here in the darkness of these trees, and I will go and mount that ladder and peep at that room, and, if it be as you desire, I will return here, and God make you happy.' Don Ruy recoiled in horror at the idea of such a creature mounting to that window. He stamped his foot and cried quietly:

‘No, by God.’ But the hand of the hanged man, livid in the darkness, roughly tore his hat from his head, and pulled his cloak from his arm, and now he covered himself, now he wrapped himself up, murmuring in anxious supplication: ‘Don’t deny it me, sir, for if I do you a great service, I shall gain a great reward.’ And he climbed the steps — he was on the broad, illuminated terrace. Don Ruy, dazed, went up and watched, and—oh, wonderful!—that man was himself, Don Ruy, all himself, in figure and gait, as he advanced between the flower-beds and the short box, lightly and gracefully with his hand on his girdle, his face lifted smilingly towards the window, and the long scarlet plume of his hat swaying in triumph. The

man went forward through the splendid moonlight. The chamber of love was there waiting, open and dark. Don Ruy gazed with flashing eyes, and trembled with amazement and anger. The man had reached the ladder; he unwound his cloak, and set his foot on the cord rung. 'Oh! there he is going up, the villain!' roared Don Ruy. The hanged man went up, and now the tall figure which was his, Don Ruy's, was half way up the ladder, and made a black patch against the white wall. He stopped!—no! he had not stopped; he mounted—he reached the top—now he had carefully rested his knee on the rounded edge of the balcony. Don Ruy gazed despairingly, with his eyes, his soul, and all his being. And lo!

suddenly a black figure rises out of the dark room, a furious voice shouts, 'Villain, villain!' and the blade of a dagger rises and falls, and again rises, shines again and comes down, and once more shines, and once more is driven in! Like a bundle the hanged man falls heavily from the top of the ladder onto the soft earth. The glass windows and doors of the balcony are immediately shut to with a crash, and there is nothing more but the silence, the gentle calm, and the moon high up and round in the summer sky. In a flash Don Ruy had comprehended the treason, drawn his sword and retreated to the darkness of the avenue, when—oh, wonder! the hanged man appears running across the terrace, seizes his sleeve, and cries to him: 'To horse,

sir, and let us be off, for the meeting was not one of love but of death!’ They both descend the avenue at full speed, hug the tank, under the protection of the flowering shrubs, plunge into the narrow walk edged with yews, pierce the gate, and stop for a moment out of breath in the road, where the moon, now fuller and more refulgent, turned night into day. And then, only then, did Don Ruy discover that the hanged man still had the dagger nailed in his breast up to the guard, while the point, shining smooth and clean, issued from his back! . . . But immediately the terrible man pushed and hurried him: ‘To horse, sir, and let us be off, for treason is still upon us!’ Terror-struck, and burning to close that adventure full of miracles and horrors, Don Ruy plucked up the reins and rode off full tilt, and



straightway, in great haste, the hanged man leapt also onto the crupper of the faithful horse. The good knight shivered all over at feeling the contact with his back of that dead body which had been hanged from a gibbet and pierced through by a dagger. With what despair he galloped then along the endless road! But violent as was his career, the hanged man neither moved to one side or the other, but sat rigid on the crupper like a statue on a pedestal, and Don Ruy felt each moment a more freezing cold congealing his shoulders as if he bore on them a sack full of ice. As he passed the Calvary, he murmured: 'Lord aid me!' Past the Calvary he gave a sudden tremble, in the fancied fear that his funereal companion would remain with him for ever, and that he was destined to gallop over the world

in an eternal night bearing a dead man on his crupper. . . . And he could not contain himself, but shouted behind him, in the wind that struck them like a switch in their career: 'Whither do you wish me to take you?' The hanged man, leaning his body so much against Don Ruy that he hurt him with the hilt of the dagger, whispered: 'Sir, it is expedient you should leave me on the hill.' It was a sweet and immeasurable relief for the good knight, for the Hill was near, and its pillars and black beams could already be discerned in the pale light. Soon the trembling horse came to a stand, white with foam, and immediately the hanged man noiselessly slid down from the crupper, and bearing up Don Ruy's stirrup like a good attendant, his skull uplifted, and his black tongue put further out from between his white

teeth, he murmured in respectful supplication: 'Sir, do me now the great favour to hang me once again from my beam.' Don Ruy trembled with horror. 'For God's sake! I hang you?' The man sighed, opening his long arms. 'Sir, it is God's will, and Hers who is dearest to God!' Thereupon, in resignation and submission to the commands of the Most High, Don Ruy dismounted and began to follow the man as he mounted pensively towards the hill, bending his back, from which the shining point of the dagger came sticking out. They both stopped under the empty beam. Round about the other beams hung the other carcasses. The silence was sadder and more deep than other earthly silences. The water in the lagoon had grown black. The moon was descending and waning. Don

Ruy contemplated the beam where the piece of cord he had cut with his sword was left short in the air. 'How am I to hang you?' he exclaimed. 'I cannot reach that piece of cord with my hand; nor can I hoist you up there by myself.' 'Sir,' replied the man, 'here, in a corner, there ought to be a long roll of cord. You will tie one end of it to this knot I have on my neck; the other end you will throw over the beam, and then, if you pull, you will, with your strength, easily be able to hang me again.' Both men bending down and walking slowly looked for the roll of cord, and it was the hanged man who found and unrolled it. . . . Then Don Ruy took off his gloves, and, taught by the man who had learned his lesson well from the executioner, he tied one end of the cord to the noose the

man had on his neck, and vigorously threw the other end, which undulated in the air, passed over the beam, and remained suspended close to the ground. Driving in his feet and tightening his arms, the bold knight pulled and hoisted the man until he was there suspended and black in the air like a natural hanged man among the others. 'Are you right as you are?' Slow and sinking came the voice of the dead man. 'Sir, I am as I ought to be.' Then to make him fast Don Ruy twisted the cord in stout knots to the stone pillar, and removing his hat and wiping with the back of his hand the sweat that covered him, he contemplated his sinister and miraculous companion. The latter was already rigid as before, with his face hanging down under his falling tresses and his feet stiffened, and the whole of

him was smooth and worm-eaten like an ancient carcass. The dagger was still nailed in his breast, and above, two crows slept quietly. 'Now, what more do you want?' asked Don Ruy, beginning to put on his gloves. From above, the hanged man murmured in a low voice, 'Sir, I earnestly beg you now that, when you reach Segovia, you tell everything faithfully to Our Lady of the Pillar, your Godmother, for I expect a great favour from her for my soul in exchange for this service that at her command has been done you by my body!' Then Don Ruy de Cardenas understood all, and, devoutly kneeling on the ground of sorrow and death, said a long prayer for that good hanged man. Afterwards he galloped towards Segovia. The morning was growing light when he

passed through the gate of St. Mauros, and the clear bells were ringing for matins in the pure air. Entering into the Church of Our Lady of the Pillar, still in disarray after his terrible journey, Don Ruy, prostrate before the altar, told his divine Godmother of the wicked design that had taken him to Cabril, and the help he had received from Heaven, and with warm tears of repentance and gratitude, swore to her that he would never more set his desire in the way of sin, nor open his heart to thoughts that came from the world and from evil.)

#### IV

AT that hour, in Cabril, Don Alonso de Lara, with eyes standing out with wonder and terror, was searching diligently all the walks and nooks and shades of his garden. When, after listening at the door of the room where he had shut up Donna Leonor that night, he slyly descended at dawn into the garden and did not encounter the body of Don Ruy de Cardenas below the balcony, close to the ladder, as he had expected with delight, he felt certain that the hateful man after falling down had, with his little remnant of life, dragged himself along, bleeding and gasping, in



the attempt to reach his horse, and get away from Cabril. But the villain would not drag himself for many yards with that stout dagger which he had thrice buried in his breast, and had left there, and he must be lying in some corner cold and stiff.

Then he searched again and again in every path, every shadow and every mass of shrubs, and, wonderful to say! he discovered neither the body, nor footprints, nor earth that had been disturbed, nor even a track of blood on the soil! And yet with a sure hand, thirsting for vengeance, he had thrice driven the dagger into the man's breast and there had left it! And the man he had killed was Don Ruy de Cardenas, for he had recognised him well straight away from the dark depths of the room where he was watching when

he crossed the terrace under the moonlight, confident and gay, with his hand on his girdle, and his face uplifted with a smile, and the feather in his hat tossing in triumph. How could so extraordinary a thing be—a mortal body survive a dagger that had thrice pierced its heart and remained nailed there? And the greater marvel was that that strong body, though it had fallen like a bundle, heavily and inertly from such a height, had left not a mark on the ground below the verandah where a strip of wallflowers and lilies ran along the wall! Not a flower was crushed—all were erect and full of life, as if freshly out, with light drops of dew! Don Alonso de Lara stopped there, motionless with surprise, almost with terror, contemplating the balcony, measuring the height of the

ladder, staring at those wallflowers, erect and fresh, without a stem or leaf bent. Next he began again a mad race down the terrace, the avenue, and the yew-path, still in hopes of finding a footprint, a broken branch, or a stain of blood on the fine sand. Nothing! The whole garden exhibited an unaccustomed order and fresh neatness, as if neither the wind that strips the leaves, nor the sun that withers, had ever passed over it. Then as evening was coming on, devoured by uncertainty and the mystery of the thing, he took horse and, without squire or groom, departed for Segovia. Bent and secretly, like a fugitive, he entered his palace by the orchard door, and his first care was to hasten to the vaulted gallery, unbar the shutters of the windows, and greedily spy the house of Don Ruy de Cardenas. All

the latticed windows of the Archdeacon's old dwelling were dark and open, breathing the freshness of the night ; and seated on a stone bench at the door, a stable-youth lazily tuned his guitar. Don Alonso de Lara went down to his room livid, thinking that certainly no misfortune could have happened in a house where all the windows were open to cool it, and where servants were amusing themselves at the street door. Then he clapped his hands and angrily called for supper, and as soon as he was seated at the head of the table, in his tall chair of carved leather, he sent for the steward, and at once offered him a cup of old wine with unusual familiarity. Whilst the man drank respectfully, standing the while, Don Alonso, drawing his fingers through his beard and forcing his sombre face to a

smile, asked for the news and rumours of Segovia. Had any event caused surprise and murmuring in the city during these days of his stay in Cabril? . . . The steward wiped his lips and affirmed that nothing had occurred in Segovia that was being talked about, unless it was that the daughter of Don Gutierres, the young and rich heiress, had taken the veil in the Convent of the Barefooted Carmelites. Don Alonso insisted, fixing his eyes greedily on the steward. And had not there been a great quarrel? . . . had not a well-known young knight been found wounded on the Cabril road? . . . The steward shrugged his shoulders; he had heard nothing in the city of quarrels or wounded knights. With a rough gesture Don Alonso dismissed the steward, and, after a spare supper, he returned

at once to the gallery to watch the windows of Don Ruy. They were now closed; in the end one at the corner shone a trembling light. All the night Don Alonso watched, tirelessly revolving in his mind the same wonderment. How could that man have escaped with his heart transfixed by a dagger? How could he? . . . When morning dawned, he got a cloak and large hat and descended, all muffled up and concealed, into the square, and remained patrolling in front of Don Ruy's house. The bells rang for matins. Tradesmen in ill-buttoned jerkins came out to raise the shutter-doors of their shops and hang out their signs. Market-gardeners, urging on their donkeys laden with baskets, were already shouting their cries of fresh vegetables; bare-footed

friars, with their wallets on their shoulders, begged an alms and gave their blessing to the girls; and cloaked *beatas*, with great black rosaries, threaded their way greedily towards the church. Then the city crier stopped at a corner of the square, sounded a horn, and in a powerful voice began to read a proclamation. The Lord of Lara had stopped, gaping, near the fountain, as though enraptured by the song of the three spouts of water. Suddenly it occurred to him that that proclamation, read by the city crier, perhaps referred to Don Ruy—to his disappearance. . . . He ran to the corner of the square, but the man had already rolled up his paper and majestically departed, beating on the pavement with his white staff. When he turned round to spy the house again, lo! his

astonished eyes encountered Don Ruy—Don Ruy whom he had killed—coming walking to the Church of Our Lady, gaily and airily, lifting a smiling face in the fresh morning air, wearing a bright jerkin and bright plumes, one of his hands resting on his girdle, the other absently twirling a stick with tassels of golden braid! Then, with halting, aged steps, Don Alonso went back to the house. At the top of the stone staircase he met his old chaplain, who had come to greet him, and who penetrated with him into the antechamber, and, after respectfully asking for news of Donna Leonor, at once told him of an extraordinary event which was causing serious murmuring and surprise in the city. Late the evening before, when the Corregedor went to visit Gallows Hill,



because the Feast of the Holy Apostles was drawing nigh, he had discovered, to his great amazement and scandal, that one of the hanged men had a dagger nailed in his breast! Was it some wicked rogue's jest? A vengeance that not even death had sated? . . . And to make the prodigy greater still, the body had been taken down from the gibbet, dragged in some vegetable or flower-garden, since tender leaves had been found clinging to the old rags, and afterwards had been hanged again, and with a new rope! . . . And such, then, was the turbulence of the times that not even the dead escaped outrage! Don Alonso listened, with hands trembling and hair on end. And immediately, in an anguish of agitation, shouting and stumbling against the doors, he wanted

to set off and verify the dismal profanation with his own eyes. On two mules, hurriedly caparisoned, they both started away for Gallows Hill, he and the astounded chaplain, whom he dragged after him. A large concourse of the people of Segovia had already collected on the hill, gazing on the marvellous horror—the dead man who had been slain! . . . They all stepped aside for the noble Lord of Lara, who hurled himself up the ridge and stood and gazed, staring and livid, at the hanged man, and at the dagger which pierced his breast. It was his dagger—it was he who had killed the dead!

He galloped in terror to Cabril, and there shut himself up with his secret, and straightway began to grow yellow and pine away, always keeping at a

distance from Donna Leonor, and hiding in the gloomy walks of the garden, murmuring words to the wind, until early one St. John's Day, a maidservant, returning from the fountain with her pitcher, found him dead below the stone balcony, all stretched out on the ground, with his fingers fixed in the bed of wallflowers, where he seemed to have been raking the soil for a long space, searching . . .

## V

To flee from these sorrowful memories, Donna Leonor, who had inherited all the possessions of the House of Lara, retired to her palace in Segovia. But as she knew now that Don Ruy de Cardenas had miraculously escaped the ambush at Cabril, and as each morning, peeping between the half-closed blinds, she followed him when he crossed the square to enter the church, with eyes which never wearied, and were wet, she would not visit Our Lady of the Pillar during the time of her mourning, fearing the haste and impatience of her heart. After-

wards, one Sunday morning, when, instead of black crape she could dress herself in purple silk, she descended the staircase of her palace, pale with a new and divine emotion, trod the flags of the square, and passed through the doors of the church. Don Ruy de Cardenas was kneeling before the altar, where he had deposited his votive bouquet of yellow and white carnations. At the sound of her rich silks he raised his eyes with a hope that was all pure and full of heavenly grace, as if an angel called him. Donna Leonor knelt down with heaving breast, so pale and so happy that the waxen torches were not more pale, nor happier the swallows that beat their unfettered wings through the ogives of the old church. They were married before that altar, kneeling on those slabs, by Don Martin, Bishop of

88 OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

Segovia, in the autumn of the year of grace 1475, when the Most Mighty and Most Catholic Sovereigns, Isabella and Ferdinand, through whom God worked great deeds by land and sea, were already rulers of Castile.

---

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty  
at the Edinburgh University Press

118



This book is  
date sta

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

REC'D LD-URL  
ORION  
LD/URL JUN 12 '90  
JUN 0 1 1990

THE LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES





3 1158 01077 9899

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**AA** 000 447 057 1

